

VZCZCXYZ0006
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHSG #0852/01 2612035
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 172035Z SEP 08
FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3725
INFO RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION PRIORITY 3535
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA PRIORITY 2097
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 0426
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES PRIORITY 1047
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 1779
RUEHGE/AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN PRIORITY 0076
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ SEP 5929
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA PRIORITY 5684
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO PRIORITY 4043
RUEHPO/AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO PRIORITY 0028
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO PRIORITY 1910
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0396

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 000852

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/17/2018
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#) [MARR](#) [BL](#) [CI](#)
SUBJECT: UNASUR'S ROAD AHEAD AFTER EMERGENCY BOLIVIA
SUMMIT; KIRCHNER LIKELY UNASUR LEADER

REF: A. SANTIAGO 851
[1](#)B. SANTIAGO 846

Classified By: Acting E/Pol Chief Tim Stater for reason 1.4 (b).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. A senior Chilean diplomat characterized UNASUR's meeting this week to deal with the crisis in Bolivia as an important early victory for the new organization and for its President Pro-Tempore, Chile. According to MFA Planning Subdirector Patricio Pradel, UNASUR is still defining the details of its mission to Bolivia, including who will join the mission and what role the OAS will play. A previously-scheduled September 24 UNASUR meeting in New York will provide an opportunity for heads of state to revisit the situation and deal with other UNASUR topics. Former Argentine President Nestor Kirchner may emerge as UNASUR Secretary General. End Summary.

UNASUR Meeting A Victory

[1](#)2. (C) Hosting a successful UNASUR meeting about the Bolivian crisis was a substantial accomplishment both for Chile as President Pro-Tempore and for UNASUR as a new organization, MFA Planning Subdirector Patricio Pradel told Poloff September 17. Chile and other UNASUR participants were unsure how well the new body could handle such a tense and divisive issue, but everyone walked away from the meeting pleased with the strength of the new organization. Broad and very high-level participation from member states was an early victory, and the ability to achieve consensus on a declaration consolidated this promising start.

[1](#)3. (C) While he was sparse on details, Pradel noted that avoiding negative references to the U.S. in the declaration was not as difficult as some press reports indicated. Rather, the challenge was understanding exactly what Bolivia wanted, he said. In fact, it still is not completely clear how the Bolivians are hoping to emerge from this situation, and even the Bolivians themselves may not know. Bolivia is committed to a "path of dialogue" for now, although the situation remains dangerous, Pradel warned. (Note: In a separate conversation with Emboffs September 16, Francisco del Campo, Counselor in the MFA's North American Affairs office, remarked that together Brazil and Chile had managed to "control the exalted ones"--a sarcastic reference to Chavez and Morales. End Note.)

Next Steps for UNASUR on the Bolivian Crisis

¶4. (SBU) UNASUR nations are still working on the details for next steps, particularly the UNASUR mission to Bolivia. According to Pradel, each UNASUR member nation will send one delegate to be part of the mission, but it is not yet clear who these members will be. Chile's representative, former UN Permanent Representative and Ambassador to Argentina Juan Gabriel Valdes, will serve as the mission's coordinator. The first meeting will be Saturday, September 20 in La Paz.

¶5. (SBU) Pradel confirmed that the OAS will also play a role in UNASUR's handling of the crisis, but said that there has not yet been substantial discussion about the role that the OAS will play.

¶6. (C) A previously scheduled UNASUR Working Group meeting on September 24 in New York will be another opportunity for high-level dialogue about Bolivia. Pradel said that many heads of state--including Lula, Uribe, Correa, Morales, Kirchner, and possibly President Bharrat Jagdeo of Guyana--are likely to attend. The originally planned discussion topics--ratification of the UNASUR treaty, selection of a secretary-general, and possible environmental and technological initiatives that the organization may try to advance at the UN General Assembly--will still be covered as time permits.

UNASUR's Likely First Secretary General: Nestor Kirchner

¶7. (C) In a significant change from earlier speculation, Patricio Pradel told us that he believes former Argentine President Nestor Kirchner is likely to be selected as UNASUR's first Secretary General. Bolivian trade negotiator Pablo Solon, who served as UNASUR's Secretary General Pro-Tempore last year, was originally the leading contender. However, some observers have said that Solon does not have the experience or gravitas desirable for the organization's first leader, and others have said that he is too close to the UNASUR bureaucracy to effectively manage it. Press reports have said that Peru, Ecuador, and Colombia opposed the selection of Solon. Ecuadorian President Correa publicly criticized Solon and expressed opposition to his candidacy. In contrast, Kirchner is a popular former president with no major detractors among UNASUR nations, Pradel said. The MFA is not aware of any specific themes or goals Kirchner would promote if he were selected.

Chile's Agenda as UNASUR President Pro-Tempore

¶8. (C) Pradel indicated that Chile's primary goals as President Pro-Tempore of the South American organization are to strengthen the group and tackle substantive regional issues. Before its term ends in May 2009, Chile hopes that nine potential UNASUR states will ratify the UNASUR treaty, formally establishing the organization. Successfully selecting a Secretary General is another major goal, Pradel said. In terms of substantive issues, Chile hopes to focus on two areas: defense, via the South American Defense Council (SADC); and social issues such as poverty, health, education, culture, and gender. UNASUR also needs to be able to respond to regional developments, Pradel said, such as when it dispatched observers to the Bolivian referendum. Themes for the annual UNASUR Summit, which will take place in Vina del Mar, Chile on October 21 and 22, have not yet been decided.

Comment

¶9. (C) UNASUR's handling of the Bolivian crisis bolstered this new organization, but a perilous road lays ahead. Chile once again proved its mettle as a moderating and conciliatory force in the region, and as a country that thinks for itself but will not hesitate to defend U.S. interests against ideologically-motivated or spurious attacks. As Foreign

Minister Foxley stated publicly on September 16, "If anyone has any doubts, let me be clear: we have very good relations with the U.S. government. We don't have any complexes, we want all countries to understand this well."

¶10. (C) Given Venezuelan and Bolivian concerns about working with the OAS, the selection of Juan Gabriel Valdes as Chile's representative to the UNASUR mission is a smart choice. Valdes has substantial foreign policy experience as a former foreign minister, an ambassador, and leader of the UN mission in Haiti. Valdes knows OAS Secretary General Jose Miguel Insulza well and, like Insulza, is a member of Chile's Socialist party.
SIMONS